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PANAMA:

"Let Us Build Panama's Future Together"

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SUPPLEMENT
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* "Let Us Build Panama's Future Together"

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[Pastoral letter from the Panamanian Bishops Conference outlines future plans]

[Text]

Introduction

(Christ Is the Way)

1. Jesus Christ is the principal way of the Church. He is our way to the house of the Father and He is also the way to each man. On this way which leads from Christ to man—on this way by which Christ unites himself to every man—the Church cannot be stopped by anyone. This is the requirement for man's temporal and eternal good.[1]

(The Church Is Faithful to Christ and Faithful to Man)

2. In fact, the Church, because of its faithfulness to Christ, must go out to meet every human being in the latter's personal, community, and social life and in the framework of the family, the society, the very nation or people, and humanity itself, approaching him in a manner that is always new and being "aware" of his situation.[2]

(Although We Have Spoken Clearly and Often)

3. Throughout these years, and more insistently since 1978,[3] we Catholic bishops of Panama have been drawing attention to the various situations of sin and death and also to the signs of hope existing in our national life together. We have certainly spoken clearly and often; our words for directing the path of this people as we have shared in its joys, sorrows, and hopes[4] have not been lacking, as will be pointed out throughout the historical survey presented here. Perhaps that prophetic denunciation should have been more energetic and ought to have been accompanied by more specific signs. If in that we failed as pastors, today, we ask forgiveness.

(We Want To Give Reasons for Hope Based on Our Faith)

4. We are again raising our voice because we men and women living in this country are going through an uncertain, confused, and unjust period that is especially hard on the poorest among us: the urban underprivileged, peasants, Afro-Americans, and Indians. We want to give the Panamanian community reasons for hope based on our faith, and we want to do so together with all men of good will by building the new future which this nation deserves.

Part One

A Look at Our Current Situation

(Synthesis for Learning Lessons and Avoiding Errors)

5. To understand our present, we must look back on the recent past. In this effort to summarize some of the most salient facts, we have two objectives in mind: first, to learn the necessary lessons so as not to repeat the errors that have caused so much prostration and grief among us, and second, without wishing to open old wounds or cause discouragement, to awaken the moral responsibility that every man and woman in this country has as the citizen of a fatherland marked by a common history and destiny. It is obvious that our synthesis does not claim to be exhaustive or, much less, to explain the judgments or interpretations that critics and historians express or will express concerning the events and persons mentioned.

(Defending Values and Protecting the Dignity of Man)

6. The Church feels involved in this undertaking because it "must always be with the nation, its life and its struggles...always ready to serve, promote, and defend the basic values that have formed a people and nation. This means everything that serves to enhance and protect the basic dignity of the human being."[5] It must therefore be a "school for the education of men capable of making history so as to work with Christ in effectively moving the history of our nations toward the kingdom [of God]."[6]

A. The Situation We Are Experiencing

(Critical Historical Period)

7. The Panamanian people are going through one of the most difficult periods in their history. The dictatorship, the prolonged crisis, and the U.S. invasion have cracked the nation's structures. Reconstruction is not easy. The problems are multiplying, and many Panamanians are living in distress because of the uncertainty of being able to meet their basic needs. Let us look at some indicators of the situation:

(Dramatic Unemployment)

8. a) The unemployment level is truly dramatic. Over 150,000 people are out of a job. In the capital city, unemployment amounts to about 27 percent of the population able to work, and in Colon it is close to 50 percent. Economic recovery is slow. But for the unemployed, the search for a solution is urgent.

(Precarious Financial Situation)

9. b) The Panamanian state's financial situation is precarious. The economic crisis has reduced its revenues drastically. The delay in U.S. aid has severely limited the possibility of promoting new projects. Failure to pay the interest and principal on the foreign debt over the past few years has shut off access to new loans and is making

it necessary to divert funds to meet now the [nation's] obligations which are in arrears. Over many years, moreover, we had become accustomed to an employer state that tried to assume the role of motor of the economy and whose means proved to be wasteful in seeking solutions to our social problems. There was also the handing out of sinecures to the regime's followers. It is now difficult for us to realize that the state does not have that unlimited capacity or that duty to provide an immediate solution to all our problems.

(Internal Struggles for Space and Influence)

10. c) After scarcely over half a year into the new government, we note with concern the internal struggles for space and influence. Each party in the alliance seems to think it has a right to demand its share in the distribution of power and the related economic benefits. Rather than a concern for the common good, what we are seeing is the emergence of the old defects of the struggle for political space, all of which reduces the credibility of the rulers.

(Avalanche of Accusations and Slow Justice)

11. d) The country is being buried in an avalanche of accusations against representatives of the previous regime. Legal actions are accumulating, and the jails are no longer big enough to hold all the prisoners. People are wondering what is happening to justice in Panama. This slowness in legal proceedings—an evil that has affected the republic since its beginning—is becoming especially burdensome in the current situation.

(Freedom of Expression and Abuses)

12. e) The country enjoys freedom of expression. But many of the media are increasingly harming the rights of third parties. Some news items and commentaries reflect an attitude of rancor and revenge. Rather than contributing to our national reconciliation, the media in many cases are sowing discord and promoting dissension among the various groups and sectors.

(U.S. Interference in Panamanian Affairs)

13. f) Meanwhile, the United States is trying to impose its rules and conditions to provide assistance to the country. A great many people are viewing with growing concern the U.S. interference in the internal affairs of Panama and the unilateral impositions with which bilateral relations between the two countries are being handled.

(Government's Lack of Leadership and Clear Definition)

14. g) After six months of government, we do not see clear leadership on the part of the current rulers as regards an economic and social policy for getting the country on its feet. It would seem that too much is being left to private enterprise and the civic clubs; this gives the impression that the state has abdicated its duty to stimulate, guide, and coordinate national life aimed toward the common good. There is no clear definition as to what must be done to solve the nation's pressing problems.

(Positive Achievements)

15. Drawing attention to these problems does not mean that we are unaware of the government's positive achievements in the midst of circumstances as difficult as those in which it had to take over the leadership of the country. There are encouraging signs. The effort to set up a new police force subject to civilian authority and suited to the country's needs, with all the concern that has aroused; the reopening of business and industry after widespread looting; the reorganization of the administration of justice; respect for individual rights; the creation of new jobs through the restoration of certain public works; the normal functioning of the banking system thanks to the release of accounts and deposits and the greater availability of credit; the organization of state finances; preparation of the annual budget and improved morality and control in public spending—those are all very important factors in building the confidence of the citizens at this time, and they must become the normal procedure in the future. In all those areas, constructive efforts have been made. But the problems affecting the nation and the people are of such magnitude that we cannot be content with partial solutions. Today's problems are the product of a profound crisis at all levels and therefore must also be attacked at the root.

B. Let Us Remember Our Recent Past

(Today Is the Consequence of Yesterday)

16. To understand what we are currently experiencing in its proper perspective, it is necessary to remember our recent past. Above all, we want to recall a number of important events from the past three decades.

(1) The 1960's

(Cause of Nationhood)

17. The 1960's saw a growing awareness of our nationhood. Particularly in the epic achievement of 9 January 1964, the cause of nationhood was taken over as the cause of an entire people. That date marked a milestone in the timetable of our nationhood and of our maturity as a people and a nation. It was clearly enunciated that the colonial enclave in our native soil had to be eliminated.

(Debilitation of Political Forces)

18. But also during that decade, the country's traditional political forces began to show signs of debilitation. With the constitutional reform and the adoption of a new electoral system in the late 1950's, there began a proliferation of political parties which represented very special interests instead of opening up to the problems and interests of working-class sectors and all of Panamanian

society. In other words, the political parties reflected "shortsighted views. Politics in Panama was focusing with increasing frequency on the search for power itself instead of being interested in objectives of greater importance."[7] In short, there was formal, nonparticipatory democracy from which large groups were visibly excluded. Despite that, it was a period of strong economic growth and of expanding social benefits.

(2) Military Coup and Consolidation of Military Government

(Military Coup of 1968)

19. It was in that context that the military coup of 1968 occurred, apparently as an initial reaction to changes decreed by the government in the National Guard's chain of command. The country was ready to accept the formation of a de facto government even though constitutional order was being violated. The reason was the weakening of the country's political institutionalization and the fact that the citizens were disillusioned by the way in which the 1968 election campaign had been conducted, the irresponsibility of the media, and the absence of valid alternatives for dealing with national problems.

(Struggle for Power and Strengthening of Torrijos' Position)

20. The period immediately following the military coup was characterized by a struggle for power that ended in the strengthening of General Torrijos' position. To achieve a monopoly that would permit political control of the country for a very long period, the military repressed the opposition sectors on the one hand and, on the other, sought to establish a direct alliance with the working-class sectors. It was the beginning of a populist era with a strong nationalistic emphasis and a dictatorial structure. To achieve those goals, measures were adopted for the purpose of strengthening the country's interior both economically and politically in relation to the metropolitan area, alliances with the worker and student movement were established, and significant support was given to public health, especially in the field of preventive medicine, through the integrated health system.

(Disappearance of Father Hector)

21. On 9 June 1971, in Santa Fe de Veraguas, a young Colombian priest named Hector Gallego disappeared. His religious and social work on behalf of the peasants had angered certain landowners. It was learned that some military men in civilian clothes had taken him away by force. Pressure from the Church and various sectors of the population could do nothing to break down the government's hardheaded obstinacy to explain the circumstances and reasons behind that disappearance. The Panamanian people hope that now, having reopened the case, they will learn what happened to Father Hector.

(New Labor Code and Housing Laws)

22. The Labor Code promulgated in 1971 was intended to give priority to white-collar workers and unions. It further strengthened the political alliance between those sectors and the then commander of the National Guard. The Housing Laws were passed in 1973 for the purpose of protecting low-income groups from the effects of inflation. Those laws were very effective at first and strengthened the image of a regime defending the interests of the people, although in subsequent years, they brought the construction of rental housing to a complete halt. The thinking behind most of those actions seems to have been populist in nature, and their implementation was characterized by improvisation and a lack of order.

(Agrarian Code and Peasant Settlements)

23. Not all projects had the same popular impact. Emphasis was placed on the Agrarian Law Code, which had originated in Roberto Chiari's administration and was concerned with the peasant settlements created as a program for the development of small-scale farmers. But practically all those settlements failed because of inadequate preparation, poor management of funds, a lack of motivation and assistance, and their ideological and political manipulation. Few of those settlements have survived, and what is left is the burden of an unpayable debt owed to the Agricultural Development Bank.

(Center for Services and Trade)

24. The Torrijos plan resulted in a degree of economic development whose spearhead was Panama's promotion as an international center for services and trade, combined with the expansion and modernization of the state, which became the chief employer. All of this also had a very high social cost: the progressive increase of the public foreign debt.

(Constitution of 1972)

25. The new Constitution was promulgated in 1972. It proclaimed the establishment of a "people's government" through the Assembly of Community Representatives. One purpose was to enable rural inhabitants and the working class to participate in political life, but paradoxically, power was centered in the leader of the "revolutionary process," who was named head of the government, and with that, the state's various branches of power came under the formal control of the Armed Forces.

(Political Alliances)

26. To achieve the objectives of the revolutionary process, a political alliance was built up, and as time passed, it came to include the representatives of the socioeconomic groups and other political groups of professionals, intellectuals, leftists, center-leftists, and centrists. Later a few members of the private business community were also brought in.

(Negotiation of New Canal Treaty)

27. One main objective at that time was the negotiation with the United States of a new canal treaty. That objective awakened a degree of national unity and broad international support. Panama was able to raise its banner before the nations of the Third World and obtain their support for renegotiation of the treaties, which had been signed in 1903 and which recognized the U.S. presence in perpetuity in the "Canal Zone."

(The Church's Position)

28. In 1978, when the instrument of ratification concerning the new Panama Canal Treaties was exchanged, the Catholic Church, which supported the moral rightness of the Panamanian demands both nationally and internationally, pointed out the following: "Far be it from us, however, to think that this event marks the final victory yearned for by the Panamanian people. We regret the ambiguities that cast a shadow over the final phases of approval of the treaties. Our voice, which was calling for greater participation by the people, was not heeded." The Church also pointed out at the time that "the successes achieved with respect to national sovereignty in Panama's foreign relations pose the urgent need to revise the process of what has been called internal sovereignty: a free society harmoniously organized to include all its members." Echoing the people, the Church emphasized conditions that were helping to create collective distrust: "The lack of a clear and proper separation between the three branches of the state (executive, legislative, and judicial); the lack of efficiency in the public administration due to the duplication of functions; personal rule; improvisation; and the lack of mechanisms for controlling the budget, investments, and the management of public funds."[8]

(Signs of Opposition)

29. Popular opposition to the strong-man regime came to the fore in 1979 in the form of objections to the macroproject involving copper mines in Cerro Colorado,[9] and it continued to grow until it culminated in mass demonstrations against the so-called educational reform, which was accused of having Marxist tendencies.[10]

(3) Democratic Opening Up Under Military Auspices

(New Period)

30. With the signing of the Panama Canal Treaties in 1977, the country entered a new period. For one thing, the economic model promoted by Torrijos in the preceding years had exhausted itself, and for another, many sectors were demanding to be allowed greater participation in the country's political life.

(Failure of Economic Model)

31. The economic model had not succeeded in solving the major problems facing most people. Quite the contrary: the poor distribution of income had grown worse, and a large majority of the population was being excluded from all progress. At the same time, Panama's promotion as a service platform and trading center contributed irresponsibly to the consumption of luxury items, with the country's internal development (agriculture, stockraising, and so on) being neglected, contrary to what had been proposed at the beginning of the regime.

(Public Indebtedness)

32. The most serious burden as far as the country's future was concerned was the growing indebtedness. To stimulate the national political-economic plan, the recourse was indebtedness. When access to debt also dried up and the time came to pay, the macroprojects being implemented (sugarmills, hydroelectric plants, and so on), being the products of mistaken economic planning and also having been spoiled by embezzlement and corruption, were not strong enough to permit an economic upturn.

(Democratic Opening Up and Military Withdrawal)

33. With the signing of the treaties, there came a degree of "democratic opening-up" which the Church encouraged through the aforementioned pastoral letter of 1978. It was a gradual process that began with the by-elections of 1980, continued with the constitutional reforms of 1983, and reached its full development with the general elections of 1984. While heading up that gradual process, the military proclaimed their "withdrawal to the barracks." In the meantime, looking ahead to the legal operation of political parties, they sponsored their own party and established a strategic alliance with it in order to guarantee their economic interests and their continuation in power.

(Democratic Opening Up and Political Parties)

34. The various political parties took advantage of that democratic opening-up and were able to capitalize on the growing discontent aroused by the persistent social problems and serious government corruption, which was becoming increasingly obvious.

(Torrijos' Death and Its Consequences)

35. On 31 July 1981, General Torrijos disappeared from the political scene suddenly and forever. The continuity of the process and of the reforms that had started was called into question, and it was not long before ambitions and internal struggles to gain control of the National Guard surfaced. The end result was that the idea of "withdrawing to the barracks" was dropped and the military entered political life more forcefully and actively.

(Socioeconomic Difficulties in 1984)

36. At the time of the first general elections (1984), the socioeconomic panorama of the country was already revealing major difficulties:

- High unemployment in the urban area, with negative effects on nutrition, health, and the satisfaction of other basic needs.

- Persistent migration to new settlements by peasant groups—the new outcasts from the country's economic, social, and political life.
- A worsening of the nationwide distribution of income over the preceding three decades, both among family groups and among the country's various regions, with a heavy concentration of income and economic activity in the urban service economy directed toward the international market.
- Increasing immorality, corruption, and disorder in the handling of public funds and taxpayers' money, resulting in extraordinary losses in some important community service institutions—and sometimes involving the complicity of the private sector (for example, the Social Security Fund).
- A loss of faith by Panamanians in the country's institutions and in the ability of those institutions to solve the corresponding social problems. There were several presidents between 1982 and 1984, and that instability in the executive branch continued even after the 1984 elections—right up until 1989, in fact.
- Critical fiscal limitations as a result of the above, and of the administrative inefficiency and the high foreign debt.
- A shrinking of the economy along with the prospect that future growth would be insufficient.

(Situation of Poverty)

37. "This series of problems afflicting every aspect of national life is affecting low-income groups with implacable severity and keeping more than one-fifth of Panamanians in a situation of extreme poverty," said the church-sponsored study entitled "Toward a More Human Economy." The hardest-hit groups were the Indian population and, in general, the peasants.[11]

(Breakdown and Deterioration of Public Morality)

38. Behind that entire situation as it existed in the mid-1980's was the breakdown and deterioration of public morality. Deplorably, corruption has been present throughout our entire history as a republic. "But never before, in the memory of living Panamanians, has it been as serious and widespread as that afflicting us now. Nor has it previously achieved the international notoriety now generated by the activities in connection with drug trafficking that occurred in 1984," said the above-mentioned study.[12]

(Consequences of Public Immorality)

39. To what extent has that phenomenon affected national life? It has led to harmful patterns of conduct such as apathy, little faith in the ability to restore the social fabric, the practice of bribery, graft, and fraudulent actions, the desire to make money "the easy way," the general spread of "playing it smart" through all segments of society, the lack of a work ethic, the lack of honesty, and so on. We must keep in mind that a whole generation of Panamanians has been raised according to those patterns of moral and social conduct, meaning that the educational task ahead of us is an enormous one.

(4) Failure of Reintegration and Growing Militarization

(Failure of 1984 Elections)

40. The elections of 1984—the first general elections since the military coup 16 years earlier (in 1968)—failed to reintegrate the political parties under military supervision. The people participated in those elections with great hopes, but their expectations of a return to democracy were frustrated. The shortcomings and mistakes noted in the election process and direct military intervention in the situation laid the foundations for later crises, which divided our country more and more and eventually dragged it to the edge of a precipice leading to the unknown.

(The Church's Position Before and After the Elections)

41. Two months before the 1984 elections, the Panamanian Bishops Conference [CEP] published a significant pastoral letter entitled "Concerning the Present Political Moment."[13] It included a list of the problems afflicting the nation, offered the relevant moral guidance, and urged the candidates and political parties to debate those problems. The publication of that pastoral letter had a great impact, but it vanished from sight in the heat of the campaign and the voting itself. The result was that after the elections, we bishops said: "It is obvious that these events have disappointed an entire people and tarnished the credibility of its electoral institutions, the essence of which is a freely expressed and correctly counted vote."[14]

(Political Conflicts and Militarism)

42. As result of the 1984 elections, the sharp division between government and opposition grew rapidly worse. Conflicts within the government party, the struggle for political space, and growing confrontation with the opposition, which was steadily gaining strength, led the military themselves to resume control of state affairs in an open and public manner. In support of their action, they could point to Law No 20, which had been approved during an "early-morning session" in September 1983 and which changed the nature of the National Guard by transforming it into an army known as the Defense Forces. That law permitted the military to control political and social life by guaranteeing them power and providing legal cover for the militarization of public institutions. Law No 20 came to represent the body of law putting the ideology of national security into specific form, as we bishops pointed out in our pastoral letter "Concerning the Present Political Moment."[15] At the time, even the United States supported the establishment of a professional army in order to ensure the defense of its own interests in the region.

(Murder of Dr. Hugo Spadafora)

43. In September 1985, the murder of Dr. Hugo Spadafora occurred, stirring the citizens because of the barbarity reflected in the carrying out of "such a cowardly and horrible crime that is unworthy of our status as a Christian and civilized people. The country's conscience cannot rest as long as those responsible for such crimes go unpunished, remaining above and outside the law,"[16] as we bishops said at the time. In the same communique, we pointed out that "appropriate investigation and public clarification (of the crimes of violence which have shaken the country recently) are required if we are to restore the confidence so longed for and needed by the Panamanian people. They will also make it possible to remove from us the specter of violence which is such a scourge in our brother countries on the continent."[17]

(Crisis of 1987: Mobilization and Repression)

44. The political crisis in June 1987 following statements by a former member of the Defense Forces brought to light what circumstances had been pointing to for a long time. That marked the beginning, under the leadership of the "Civic Crusade," of the mobilization of the citizens, with the result that the repressive apparatus went into action. From June 1987 until December 1989, the country experienced the most confused and difficult period of its republican history, with increasing violations of human rights, the suppression of constitutional guarantees, the closing of media opposed to the regime, the capricious administration of justice, arbitrary imprisonment, torture, exile, searches of institutions of a civic character and/or the private sector, and the breakdown of institutional legal order. The military dictatorship was making its entire weight felt, as had already been made evident on the regrettably famous "Black Friday"—10 July 1987.

(Class Struggle and False Nationalism)

45. Throughout that crisis, the government used two weapons. The first was the argument of class struggle (rich versus poor). The second was a narrow and exclusive nationalism that created deep divisions within the Panamanian community. In that connection, we said the following in our communique dated 8 July 1987:

"As Panamanians, we deeply resent and emphatically reject any foreign intervention in the internal affairs of the republic. We believe, however, that nationalist feeling should not be exploited to divert attention and make people forget the causes of the current crisis. It must be emphasized that genuine nationalist reaffirmation does not consist solely of defending our sovereignty from outside interference but also of facing up to internal problems without blind adherence to class or party."[18]

(Economic Consequences of the Crisis)

46. As part of the political crisis that began in 1987, Panamanian bank funds in the United States were frozen in March 1988, and to that were added the economic sanctions, which helped make the existing economic deterioriation worse. The country—especially the poorest sectors—experienced truly dramatic moments due to the resulting unemployment and as a result of hunger. In referring to those actions by the United States, we bishops described them as violating national sovereignty and, given our dependent economic structure, as being morally unjust because they constituted an attack on the life of our people. Because of that, we demanded their immediate suspension and rejected any military intervention.[19]

(Elections of 1989: Attitude of the People and Frustration)

47. The elections of 7 May 1989 constituted a great show of civic spirit on the part of the Panamanian people and reflected the resolute desire to see a change of government in the direction of a democratic state of law. On that important date, the people demonstrated that they possessed wisdom and a capacity for analysis and discernment. That is a lesson which we have all learned and one which the politicians of the present and the future will have to keep very much in mind. The story of what happened after 7 May is known to everyone, and on 10 May 1989, when the election results were annulled by the Electoral Court, the people saw their hopes for a nonviolent solution to the existing situation in the country dashed once again.[20]

(Murder of Father Van Kleef)

48. On the same day as the elections of 7 May 1989 and in the context of those elections, the intimidation, violence, and contempt for life unleashed by the dictatorship reached "their peak" with the murder of Father Nicolas Van Kleef of the Community of Pauline Fathers in Santa Marta, Diocese of David. The death of Father "Nico" "provides tangible proof of the contempt for life and for the human person that has taken hold in certain official organizations and of the irresponsibility with which weapons are handed over to people who have neither the ability nor the discernment required for their use."[21]

(Ineffectiveness of the OAS)

49. Another hard blow to the Panamanians was the ineffectiveness of the Organization of American States in dealing with this state of things, specifically the events surrounding the elections of 7 May and the incidents which later occurred in open violation of the National Constitution. Its insistence on the principle of nonintervention ignored in practice the older and no less important principle of people's sovereignty. That lack of solidarity is a lesson which we, the Latin American nations, must remember in order to prevent a repetition of experiences as painful as those which Panama has gone

through and which resulted in the traumatic event constituted by the U.S. invasion of our country.

A few words by Pope John Paul II may enlighten us in this respect:

"With regard to other countries, it must be recognized that each nation is entitled to live in peace and safety on its own soil without suffering unjust threats from abroad, whether military, economic, or ideological in nature. This deep-rooted mentality must be a point of unanimity for all men of good will, and, I would venture to say, diplomats in particular. But noninterference is not enough, because it might mean nothing other than indifference to the fate of nations not favored by nature or by historical circumstances."[22]

(5) The U.S. Invasion and National Reconstruction

(The U.S. Invasion and the Church's Position)

50. The date of 20 December 1989 represents a real tragedy in the annals of our history. In the early morning hours on that day, we were faced with the overwhelming fact that we had been invaded by the United States. Two days after the invasion, feeling ourselves to be a part of this people and speaking as pastors, we expressed ourselves as follows:

"And it distresses us deeply in our sense of nationhood and as Panamanians because we feel that our dearest sentiments and most ancestral aspirations have been trampled on; a young and jovial people, peaceful and loving freedom, is experiencing a time of invasion and uncertainty because of the U.S. military action.... These painful events signify a step backward in our nation's history.... It is necessary that U.S. military action cease and that Panama's civilian government assume political, police, and military power as soon as possible."[23]

(Consequence of the Invasion)

51. In his heart of hearts, every Panamanian greatly regrets that this invasion by a strong and powerful country has occurred on our little isthmus. The consequences—material, psychological, and moral—are incalculable. "The shellings and the conflicts with Panamanian troops and other armed groups caused serious material damage and, above all, the loss of human life in the civilian population in the cities of Panama and Colon and in the country's interior.... Only from the perspective of history will it be possible to evaluate these events and their consequences," said the churches of the Christian Ecumenical Council.[24] The people want to know how many were killed, who they were, and where their remains are located,[25] since even now, six months after the invasion, many relatives are not sure that they have accurate information.

(Attitudes Toward the Invasion)

52. In response to the invasion, "a historical fact that is facing us with more harshness and clarity than our own Ancon Hill...an experience which, instead of weakening us, ought to strengthen and purify our national being,"[26] we are a divided people. A survey conducted a few weeks after the invasion showed that a high percentage of the population regarded it as a "liberation." Another percentage [copy not clear] flatly. In that respect, the Church has said that such an expression ("liberation") can only be justified to the extent that it implies no restriction of any kind, whether in the present or in the future, on any of the attributes proper to Panama's freedom and sovereignty throughout its territory. It must give rise to a fair and peaceful relationship between Panama and the United States within the family of all other nations and, above all, the Americas.[27] It is, then, a trauma which we must overcome with realism and without demagoguery or political opportunism.

(Future of Panamian-U.S. Relations)

53. From the very beginning of its independent life, Panama's relationship with the United States has been one of domination and dependence. The fact of the invasion raises a question which is disturbing in itself but which is not insoluble once we are aware of it: "Will we be able now and in the future to live with the autonomy we deserve as a sovereign people?"[28]

(The Church and Panama's Rights)

54. The Catholic Church of Panama is aware of that reality in connection with the United States. "For that reason, it has been firm and steadfast as regards all the rights of this tiny nation in the past, and it will continue to be in the future. As it was in support of the right to new treaties in the 1970's, and in support of the rights of the Panamanian people and nation in this period of recovery which we are now beginning."[29] And as it is at this moment in supporting the rights of those suffering from a loss because of the military action of 20 December.

C. Challenges With Regard to the Situation Described

(Leadership of a Country in Ruins)

55. The government that was established following the invasion is that legitimately elected by the Panamanian people in the elections of 7 May 1989. There cannot be the slightest doubt about this. The circumstances in which it assumed power were not those that all of us would have liked, but the fact is that it has accepted a tremendous challenge by taking over the leadership of a country that is in ruins not only from the effects of the invasion but also and principally because of growing deterioration over the past few years.

(Creating and Purifying Incipient Democracy)

56. We have before us an incipient democracy which we must gradually relearn, since we have been without it for almost a generation. The challenge, in that democratic context, is to not repeat the errors of the recent past and of the formal democracies that existed before 1968.

There are reports of nepotism, partisan interests, wrongful dismissals, and discriminatory justice in the current government. In this weak and incipient democracy, it is primarily the rulers who must become aware of the historic period we are experiencing. All of us, government and citizens, will be responsible for the success or failure of democracy.

That is the first challenge: how can we learn to live in a democracy? What do we need in order to do so?

(Economic Policy)

57. In the country's current socioeconomic situation, the problems of unemployment, hunger, and decent family housing have grown worse. The demand for housing totals 273,000 units (including partly and completely deteriorated housing and adding in overcrowding).[30] The situation in the health sector is critical due to the lack of funds, medicines, and equipment in general and the deterioration of the infrastructures themselves (health centers, hospitals, and so on). This entire situation presents us with a second challenge: how are we going to get our economy started and in which direction are we going to go? Will we continue to depend solely on promotion of the service sector? What should we do with the agricultural and industrial sectors?

(Foreign Debt and Development)

58. Another important challenge is Panama's foreign debt. How are we going to deal with it while avoiding more deaths—through malnutrition, exclusion from society, and so on—among our poor and suffering people?

(People's Participation)

59. The manipulation to which the people's organizations have been subjected has drained them of their strength. How can we guarantee a complete political, economic, and social democracy in which real participation will be granted to all citizens, especially working people?

(Nationalism and Integration)

60. In the decade before us—on the way to the year 2000, which is when we must assume full responsibility for the canal—what steps must we take to improve our nationhood and our awareness as a free and sovereign people? Along those same lines, and taking into account the fact that we are a multiracial, multicultural, and multilingual country, how can we achieve the integration, within that reality we call the fatherland, of all human groups, and especially the Indo-American, Spanish-Indian, and Afro-American ethnic groups that are so often excluded from national life?

(Reconciliation)

61. In the recent past, so strongly marked by its division of our countrymen into the "good" and the "bad" and the "patriotic" and the "unpatriotic," the many actions tending to set us one against the other, including the arming of civilians, have helped more than a little to embitter the national soul with hate and resentment. How can we resolve this entire complex situation and move toward reconciliation in truth, justice, freedom, and love? That, perhaps, is the greatest challenge of all and the precondition if the complete reconstruction of the country and nation is to be possible.[31]

(Solidarity)

62. The crisis has taught us to show more solidarity. But we note that everyone is tending to revert to his previous pattern of behavior: wastefulness, unnecessary luxuries, and consumerism. There are thousands of poor people in our country. Each of them is also the presence of Christ among us. They demand our solidary respect and love. How can we inculcate in ourselves a culture of participation and solidarity?

(Ecology)

63. Our present circumstances place before us a country in a state of deterioration and growing and uncontrolled ecological destruction. This is a problem with moral implications, and it has a lot to do with the problem of poverty and with respect for life. What policies will the government adopt in this area? What role should the educational system play? How can the churches make their contribution in this field?[32]

(Moral Recovery)

64. The moral fiber of the individuals making up a nation is the basis of everything else: their identity as such, their culture, their way of dealing with problems, and the spirit in which they face the future. The painful reality which we feel is one of widespread corruption at alarming levels. This moral and social breakdown was made clear in the way in which public affairs were managed in the recent past with the participation of both civilians and military and also in the conduct of private business. We saw this situation painfully reflected at its worst in the looting and pillaging faced by our people during the invasion.

(Other Signs of Lack of Morality)

65. The lack of morality can also be detected in the world of young people and in the home—in the social and family areas. Signs of this situation are the increase in drug and alcohol abuse and the inordinate desire to consume, all of which destroy the life, character, savings, and values of many young people and heads of families. There is also an increase in the exploitation of vice, organized and commercialized prostitution, and juvenile delinquency and a proliferation of bars and taverns, especially among working people. "These are factors which give rise to immorality, sexual promiscuity at a very early age, and a lack of responsibility and respect in relations between men and women, who, through matrimony, are necessarily the foundation of the home and the family."[33]

Here we have the essence of all the challenges facing us. In the face of the breakdown in human and moral values that is eroding the social fabric of the Panamanian community, how are we going to respond?

(Call To Overcome Fatalism)

66. All the problems and challenges seeming to weigh down on us are just so many calls from God our Father to surmount our historical and cultural dependencies and overcome the complex which tells us we are unable to solve our own problems. What this involves is an attitude toward life that surmounts all fatalism and awakens one's energies for building something new. We owe this to every Panamanian brother at this specific moment and as we face the future.

Part Two

God's Plan for Us

(The Church Announces the Gospel of Christ)

67. The Church is the people of God moving through history in the midst of the problems, frustrations, and hopes of men and their nations, offering them, as part of its own mission, the Gospel of Jesus Christ—the good news of the kingdom of God—and feeling strengthened in its pilgrimage by the Lord's grace.[34]

A. God's Plan

(God Has a Plan of Salvation for Panama)

68. God our Father has a plan of salvation for Panama. God loves this land which he made "very tiny and Christian," as one of our popular religious songs expresses it. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life[35] for Panama. He lives and is present in our midst: "by Him, with Him, and in Him," it is possible to discover the true meaning of life and history. It is possible to build a more just, fraternal, and humane world where the seeds of the kingdom of God will grow, where the values of the kingdom will be experienced, and where one can truly speak of a "civilization of love" based on justice, truth, and freedom.[36] It is possible to build the peace that is longed for by the world and especially by our Central American isthmus.[37]

(God Saves in History)

69. Many centuries ago, the Spirit of God awakened in Israel, the chosen people, the conviction that the Lord was actively present in its history. No people—said the Hebrews with delight and pride—has a god as close as Yahve is to us.[38] He is a God who walks with His people, speaks to them, guides them, and liberates them. He is a God who saves! He allows fruitful and purifying suffering, helps people understand its meaning, and calls for profound change through his prophets. History is, therefore, the history of salvation, the fulfillment of God's plan, and the process of the gestation and painful birth of a new world.[39]

(God Takes Up Man's Cause)

70. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."[40] Hope and confidence in the Lord, who is faithful to His promise despite the sins of His people, marks the history of Israel through those who have been able to experience that attitude of the poor and humble. There is much more reason why hope and confidence should mark our history—the history of us who believe in Jesus of Nazareth and therefore call ourselves Christians and the new people of God. Through the mystery of the incarnation, God becomes man, like us in all respects save sin."[41] That being the case, man's cause is God's cause, human pain is assumed by God, and the cross and death are the way of salvation and life. The risen Jesus Christ is the source of life for as many of us as believe in Him and He clears the way to a new humanity.[42]

(Jesus and His Preferential Love for the Poor)

71. In assuming the cause of man, Jesus reveals in a special way God's preferential love for the poor. God reveals Himself in the Bible as the one who liberates the poor who ask His help and the afflicted who have no protector and as the defender of the humble and of the people—as the one who shatters the individual who exploits his brother.[43] Because of that, the love of Jesus "favors the small, the weak, and the poor"[44] and identifies itself with them.[45]

(Believing in Christ: Living by Faith)

72. Believing in the risen Jesus Christ means a life illumined by faith. It means accepting—without wanting to touch, as Thomas did—Jesus Christ's victory over evil, sin, and death. It means confessing the only Lord of life and history as Son of God and liberator of man. It means really believing that He is—today, yesterday, and always—the way, the truth, and the life for this mankind which is struggling between light and darkness.

(Believing in Christ: Living by Hope)

73. Believing in the risen Jesus Christ means a life strengthened by hope. It means renewing our innate desire for life, peace, and happiness. It means discovering the meaning of struggle, effort, and pain, trusting that neither injustice, falsehood, nor death will ever have the last word in our personal and community history. This is guaranteed by our God, the same God who raised Jesus from the dead.

(Believing in Christ: Living by Love)

74. Believing in the risen Jesus Christ means a life transformed by love—that Christian love which is the fruit of the Spirit of the risen Jesus Christ and makes us His body and His people. With the unavoidable commitment to fraternity, solidarity, fellowship, and service, thus repeating the experience of the apostles, the first Christians, and so many believers from every age who

have been called from their encounter with the Lord to be His witnesses and give their lives for their smaller brothers.

B. Vision of Faith Today

(Reading History Through the Eyes of Faith)

75. What all of this demands of us now is that we read our history with the eyes of faith, accepting reality without fatalism and discovering the presence and action of God. We are taught to do so by the simple and poor people who, in times of crisis, pray and lift their eyes to the Lord and always seek in Him the strength and light they need. We cannot miss this opportunity to learn the lessons of our more recent history. We cannot doubt the fruit of so many campaigns of prayer, so much pain buoyed by hope, and so much generous dedication.

(Historic Challenge to Believers)

76. That is how we can understand our path, and for believers, that path is the challenge of this historic moment. It is our Lord calling us today to radical and profound conversion and renewal in which, together, we seek God's kingdom and His justice without fear or covetousness,[46] build the civilization of love which "repudiates violence, selfishness, waste, exploitation, and moral folly,"[47] struggle for man's complete liberation in an attitude of fellowship and participation,[48], and involve ourselves to the new evangelization.[49]

(Call to Conversion, Reconciliation, and Reconstruction)

77. We bishops of Panama wish to direct this renewed call to conversion, reconciliation, and national reconstruction to all Catholic people and all men of good will. We wish to contribute that which is our precious possession and our greatest service: the light of the Gospel, the doctrine of the Church.

(Accepting God's Reign in Our Lives)

78. It should be remembered that the conversion to which Christ calls us in the Gospel means the radical acceptance of God's reign in our lives. This involves the following:

- Accepting the God of Jesus Christ as the only Lord in an attitude of poverty.
- Living the justice which is born in the heart and transforms all social reality.
- Understanding love to be the only law and expressing it in effective gestures of respect for others, generosity and service toward the poorest members of society in particular, and the pardoning of offenses.
- Excluding materialism and selfishness along with all their motivations and manifestations.

(No Peace Without Love, Justice, Truth, and Freedom)

79. It should also be remembered that love, justice, truth, and freedom are inseparable elements in the building of peace. The "civilization of love" to which we must be committed requires rejection of the false gods of possessions, power, and pleasure at all costs. It cannot be built without promoting fellowship and participation at all levels, nor can it be built by separating personal conversion from the transformation of the structures of sin or by ignoring the voice of the poor and the young.

(Man's Dignity and Its Demands)

80. Lastly, it should be remembered that freedom is the gift of God and the task of man, whose dignity requires relationships: with God as a son who hears and obeys His voice and cooperates in His work; with other people as a brother in respect and fraternal solidarity; and with the world as a lord and master who is not enslaved by and does not fight for things.

C.1. Joint Responsibility

(Reality of Sin)

81. Rising up in contrast to the plan of God is the reality of sin. So it has been since the beginning of human history, so it was among the people of Israel, and so it is also in our own history and among our own people. With humility but also with clarity and firmness, we also feel obliged to denounce that presence of sin. We are as we are because we are sinners. And we are all responsible for this situation of sin. In varying degrees and in various ways, to be sure, but we are all sinners, guilty and responsible: believers and nonbelievers, rich and poor, civilians and military, Panamanians and foreigners. This is a reality which each of us, in our consciences and before God who searches the heart, must acknowledge.

(Urgency of Accepting Responsibility Over Evil)

82. It is urgent to discover, assume, and accept in humility that joint responsibility. "He who is without sin let him cast the first stone."[50] Today our Lord is also saying that to us, who so frequently forget that "the line separating good from evil passes through the heart of each man"[51]—of each one of us. The temptation to place all the responsibility for evil on others and elevate ourselves as judges is not new, and it is not absent from any of us. We must also denounce that attitude—that new form of Phariseeism—since it will make the conversion, reconciliation, and reconstruction of the country impossible.

(Sin Means Rejecting God and Rejecting Man)

83. We say, and it is true, that sin is disobeying God. But we frequently forget that disobedience is, by that very fact, the root and ultimate cause of all the suffering and evil that affect mankind. He who harms a human being is a sinner "because the glory of God consists in the fact that man should live" [52] And this is obvious in many clear and extreme instances of personal sin (adultery, abortion, lying, robbery, torture, murder, and so on). But there is also such a thing as social sin, and it is manifested in the unjust structures which cause rejection and the oppression that is kept alive, in one way or another,

by everyone: by those who create those structures and those who accept them and by those who impose them and those who cooperate with them out of fear, self-interest, or simple idleness. And alongside the sin of action or commission, there is the sin of omission: the responsibility borne by the one who does nothing good, does not struggle against evil, and does not run any risks or get involved in order to change the causes of evil, suffering, and injustice.

(False and True Attitudes)

84. We do not believe it is possible to say simply and plainly that "I am absolutely not responsible for anything" when a situation like that being experienced in our country has been reached. Nor is it easy to avoid the temptation to engage in a "witch hunt" and in the futile and interminable search for supposed or real responsibilities. On the other hand, it is easy to imagine the evil which such attitudes can do to our already very battered country. And it is even easier to reflect on what the consequences of our sins have been: a ruined people and a deeply wounded society crying out for justice, resisting reconciliation, and needing to rebuild itself.

C.2. False Paths

(Wrong Paths)

85. As pastors, we must denounce once again the wrong paths which God does not wish us to return to and which have brought us to the situation we are in now. They are the same paths which have sown pain and death among other brother nations and which we bishops of Central America pointed to in a recent document as being the main obstacles to peace[53]:

- The warmongering and militaristic path—the path of weapons and violence which frequently ends in dictatorships and leaves death and destruction in its wake.
- The path of the imposed political will, which is characterized by the coveting of power and which prostitutes even the concepts of security, fatherland, and sovereignty.
- The path of economism, which views development purely from the materialistic and consuming point of view and increases corruption and social injustice.
- The path of political hegemony, which sacrifices poor and defenseless nations in the struggle for power by big powers and ideologies.
- The reductionist religious path, which manipulates the Gospel and the religious feeling of our nations in the service of ideologies.
- The path of excluding and ignoring the people's majorities: the Indians and peasants, who are victims of cultural aggression and poverty.

D. New Men, New Communities, a New Society

(Deep Concern Over the Crisis of Values)

86. As pastors, we are deeply concerned over the obvious crisis of values. We must further intensify the evangelizing work of the Church. We must carry out a complete evangelization in order to overcome the permanent danger of separating the world of God from the world of man: the dualism between the individual and society. The Christian who works in politics, economics, or culture cannot do so without reference to his faith. The way in which he lives out his religious convictions can illuminate or darken the world of relationships, ideals, values, and institutions which he forms and in which he lives.

(Missionary Activity and Pastoral Assemblies)

87. This brings us to our obligation to stir up missionary activity throughout the country under the slogan "new men, new communities, and a new society." It also brings us to the process of the pastoral assemblies which we have been encouraging in each of our dioceses. The challenge to the Church is to evangelize culture. We are aware of the need for a new evangelization which will not be simply decorative or superficial and which will not simply add a kind of Christian veneer to our society, but which will penetrate deep into its roots and life.[54] We acknowledge with humility that that is not yet a reality in Panama, as can be seen from the lack of a faith commitment, the disintegration of the family, the social injustices, the scandalous imbalances in the distribution of goods, the situations of poverty, and the lack of political culture and awareness.

(Importance of Evangelizing Culture)

88. In the new evangelization to which the entire Latin American Church, including us in Panama, is committed, that evangelization of culture and cultures is of vital importance. That is the project which, as a church, we are carrying out and in which, with determination and generosity, all of us must participate with a new missionary ardor permeated by sanctity as we seek new methods and ways of expressing and communicating the evangelical message to our Panamanian community, which stands in such great need of the Word of God.[55]

(What the Evangelization of Culture Involves)

89. This evangelization of culture means evangelizing "the standards of judgment, decisive values, points of interest, lines of thinking, sources of inspiration, and patterns of life in our Panamanian world" so as to bring about the permanent evangelical renewal and transformation of our human life together, with the consequent change required in its structures to make them more human[56]: economic life, political life, and social coexistence (ethnic groups, marriage and family, education, popular religious practice, and the media).

(New Society and New Church)

90. New men and women and new communities are what Panama urgently wants from us who profess to be Christians if a society and church that are really new are to be possible. This means a church that shows its solidarity with the historical path followed by its people: a church which, by virtue of its own mission, is the servant of all, excluding no one but showing a special concern for the poor in this country.

(Church and Values)

91. The church—pastors and people—cannot renounce its task of drawing attention to the moral guidelines and basic values which are required for any society wishing to be more just and peaceful. In the tough situation being experienced by the Panamanian people—a situation that weighs mainly on the most underprivileged and poor—we underscore the urgency to think about the interests of the majority by restructuring the economic processes in a rational, solidary, and participatory manner.

E. Reconciliation

(Faith and National Reconciliation)

92. We are seriously concerned about the existing divisions in our country and the difficulties involved in overcoming them. Our faith must mature and become more consistent, and for that to happen, our evangelization must place strong emphasis on the task of national reconciliation by supporting all initiatives which promote that reconciliation, particularly the recommendations of the Committee of National Reconciliation.

(Mercy and Justice)

93. As we were reminded by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical "Dives in Misericordia," those of us who believe in a God rich in mercy are called to show mercy as well. Mercy and forgiveness are not opposed to justice; they require it, but they also view it in a way which does not confuse it with revenge and a settling of accounts in some new version of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." The guilty party can only be forgiven—and can only be considered guilty—after being properly tried and found guilty. The reconciliation and building of a more humane world is possible only through forgiveness.

(Demand for Justice)

94. We understand the demand for justice on the part of our people, who witnessed the administration of justice corrupted by power. That insistence on legal justice is proper, and no one can or should stand above or beyond the law. The Bible regards the administration of justice as something fundamental to the life of the people. Especially when it comes to the rights of poor and simple people, those being the rights most abused by the courts. For that reason, the times of God's presence are proclaimed as being times of greater justice. The prophet Isaiah expressed this as follows: "A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him. Not by appearance shall He judge nor by hearsay shall He decide, but He shall judge the weak and shall judge the poor with justice."[57]

(Reconciliation and Forgiveness)

95. The reconciliation which we advocate and our country needs is not the same as an unconditional pardon—with no consequences of a penal or legal nature—for all those who committed some kind of crime. It is a moral attitude which must have its effect at the practical level, and it requires that everyone:

- Respect the dignity of every individual, regardless of his moral conduct.
- Hate evil, injustice, and sin, but never the sinner.[58]
- Guarantee a fair trial to those charged with crimes, without taking justice into our own hands or confusing it with revenge.
- Accept the presumption of innocence until the opposite is proven and not slander others with unfounded accusations.
- Satisfy the demands of justice and then give the convicted person opportunities for reintegration into society.[59]
- Be willing to forgive from the heart as God forgives us.
- Not reject the possibility of a pardon or amnesty—except in the case of very serious crimes involving the shedding of blood, corruption, or political crimes—as is normal practice in situations like ours.
- Look more toward the future than toward the past, overcoming whatever might divide us.
- Believe in the possibility of everyone's conversion and pray for those who have harmed us.
- Acknowledge our own faults, ask forgiveness, and try to make amends for them.

(Committee of Reconciliation)

96. We offer these guidelines for the very difficult and important task of reconciliation in Panama. We are confident that the Committee of National Reconciliation established at the invitation of the president of the republic and presided over by the Archbishop of Panama will offer and disseminate moral and social guidelines which we must assimilate and practical suggestions which we will have to apply.

(Forgiveness Is Not Impossible)

97. Although it seems impossible, we can do it. The Panamanian people are bighearted and capable of forgiving. The dictatorship deprived us of the honor of being a country capable of replacing a de facto government peacefully and at the ballot box. Let us not deprive ourselves of the grace of making, like other nations, a peaceful and calm transition to democracy without unnecessary traumas or persistent resentments.

Part Three

What We Want as a Nation

(Indicate Courses of Action)

98. After considering the difficult situation we are experiencing as a nation and after illuminating it by the light of the Word of God and His plan of love toward men, we wish to indicate a few courses of action. We cannot stop with the words "we must change our lives and the structures of society." "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven," says the Lord.[60]

A. Political Matters

(Crucial Political Moment)

99. Politically, we are experiencing a crucial moment in our country's history. Moments of crisis can be moments of new opportunities if we know how to read them by the light of faith and allow God to speak to us. Ahead of us lies the great and exciting task of rebuilding the country—of building a more just and unified Panama. Let us not miss this opportunity. Let us be equal to the historic challenge.

(Recovering Sovereignty)

100. As a nation, it is necessary that we recover our complete national sovereignty. Panama demands that the U.S. Government respect the integrity of its territory in accordance with the common principles of international law. The Panamanian state must be autonomous in making decisions which affect government policy. There can be no justification for a U.S. military presence outside those areas strictly assigned to those forces by the canal treaties, except with the knowledge and authorization of the Panamanian Government.

(Security of the National Territory)

101. With a view to the complete recovery of the canal in the year 2000, Panama cannot renounce its duty to take responsibility for the security of its territory and the canal. Taking that responsibility does not necessarily mean the presence of a military force. The security in question can be guaranteed by a special police force in combination with international neutrality pacts. But above all, it must be guaranteed by a national awareness and civic education, a determination to respect our territorial integrity, and by a true social peace which is the product of justice.

(Invasion: Rights of Panama and Duties of the United States)

102. We have raised our voice on other occasions and are doing so again in defense of Panama's rights by virtue of the damage caused by the invasion and the moral duty of the United States to provide the necessary aid for the country's reconstruction. So far, deplorably, that aid is late in arriving and is insufficient, thus reflecting insensitivity to the pain of a nation, especially the poorest among nations. We also emphasize that the relatives and family members of those killed during the invasion are entitled to compensation, as are those who suffered physical injury or material loss. All those claims—humanitarian rather than political—deserve our resolute support.

(Restoring Public Institutions)

103. The total absence of institutional order in this country in the recent past—a situation that grew worse beginning in the 1980's in particular—has resulted in the almost total disappearence of the Office of the Public Prosecutor, the legislative body, the Electoral Court, and the Supreme Court, those institutions having been stripped of the independence which they ought to possess. In practice, they were subordinate to the Defense Forces. The government that has been in power since 20 December is facing a vacuum as far as those institutions are concerned. It is urgently necessary, considering the historic circumstances in which they ought to be functioning, that those institutions recover their prestige within a democratic framework.

(Specific Responsibility and Citizen Co-Responsibility)

104. All of society shares responsibility for ensuring the transformation of our political, social, and economic structures, but the rulers must become aware that "initiatives and human and rational management of the process depend largely on those placed in positions of government and leadership.[61] While it is true that "a communion of hearts and minds in search of the common good" is necessary, it is essential that the common good "be explained, proposed, and directed by the rulers with the responsible participation of the citizens."[62] This is the responsibility which always devolves upon the president of the republic and, to varying degrees, on anyone exercising a position of leadership in the government.

(Politics, the Common Good, and 'Political Spaces')

105. We take the liberty of asking each of our rulers to leave behind for good the struggle for "political spaces," which we have denounced so often in the past. If true politics is the search for the common good, the present moment is not the most suitable time to be thinking of personal or group interests: it is a time to work for the common good and to commit ourselves, with all our best talents, to the people's well-being. Let us adopt as our own the words spoken by Jesus to his disciples: "The kings of the nations exercise lordship over them and are called benefactors even while oppressing them. It must not be so with you. On the contrary, the most important among you should behave as though he were the least important."[63]

(Mission of the Legislative Assembly)

106. The Legislative Assembly has a fundamental and decisive mission as regards the destiny of the nation, particularly at the present time. That mission is succinctly described in Article 144 of the National Constitution, which says: "Legislators shall act in the interest of the nation, and they represent their respective parties and the voters in their election districts in the Legislative Assembly." It is obvious that the Legislative Assembly's primary responsibility is to the entire nation and that that responsibility takes precedence over their respective parties and even the voters which each one represents when the immediate interests of those parties and voters do not coincide with the common good of the country. It is the Legislative Assembly which must legislate and give legal form and economic impetus to the government's plans and programs, serving the interests of the entire nation and showing no partiality toward persons or groups. We hope that its membership will soon be completed through the necessary elections so that there will be full representation of the country.

(Function of Political Parties)

107. We urge that personalism in the political parties be abandoned. Many parties seem to form around individuals rather than on the basis of a government project. As channels for the people's participation in national affairs, the political parties must be based on a view of man and society, and they must design specific solutions for dealing with the problems afflicting the people. The candidate for any position is expected to show honesty, transparence, technical and human capability, and, above all, a deep sense of social justice.

(Elections and the People's Will)

108. Following the elections of 7 May 1989, it has become clear that the Panamanian people will never again accept electoral fraud. The people not only displayed civic maturity in those elections but also showed that they were aware of their rights and obligations as citizens. For that reason, people are more aware than ever that elections must be honest and that there must be a willingness to demand respect for the people's will as expressed at the ballot box.

(Education in Politics)

109. Constant and continuous education in political life is necessary. Politics is not something obscure, nor should it be equated with deceit. Learning from our experiences, we want to motivate the people to play an active part in politics, including party politics, in an effort to strengthen parties which genuinely defend the interests of the large majorities and respect our cultural identity and religious conscience. That political education must be a constant activity; it involves educating people to analyze our reality so they can begin to see alternative solutions. There must also be education in the civic attitudes of honesty, service, civic responsibility, and training for leadership. Pope John Paul II says in his "Apostolic Exhortation to the Laity": "The lay faithful can in no way renounce participation in 'politics'—that is, the multifaceted and varied social, legislative, administrative, and cultural activity which is aimed at promoting the common good organically and institutionally."[64] Our Catholic Santa Maria La Antigua University must assume a vanguard role in that task of political education by training Christian lay leaders.

(Revision of the Electoral System)

110. To restore the credibility of the exercise of political rights, political education must be accompanied by a revision and reorganization of the electoral apparatus and electoral laws so as to facilitate participation and not restrict representation by establishing economic conditions or requirements.

(Politics Is More Than Elections and Parties)

111. We emphasize that there is more to politics than elections and the work of the political parties. Politics comprises everything having to do with the struggle for the common good and for the improvement of living conditions. Important in that respect is the daily work of the basic groups: their community organization, their work on behalf of the local community, the presentation of their demands to the appropriate authorities, and their vigilance to ensure that the rulers do the job for which they were elected.

(Participation by People's Organizations)

112. We urge the various intermediate groups—organizations, unions, and associations—to suggest positive solutions for building a better Panama. All of us, in a responsible and creative manner, must suggest ideas and solutions. While not ignoring the important role they play, we must point out that civic clubs and business organizations are not the sole guardians of civilian life, nor can they claim to be spokesmen for the working people's interests. The various organized people's groups and committees have something to contribute, especially on those issues that affect them directly. In this connection, we encourage our peasants to organize, since we note a great absence of organizations of that kind among them. As far as the Indian groups are concerned, it is necessary that they work together with their traditional authorities and their own types of organization so that they can stand up for their historical rights, make their common needs known, and suggest alternatives for the suitable development of their territories so that, as managers of that development, they may make their special contribution to the building of our new fatherland.

B. Economic Matters[65]

(Overcoming Poverty Is Everyone's Task)

113. The great task in national reconstruction, which is that of overcoming poverty, is everyone's task. All of us

must attack it with all our determination, all our creativity, limitless generosity, and a total spirit of sacrifice. The hungry cannot wait! "You shall share your bread with the hungry, and you shall not turn your back on your brother. Then shall your light break forth as the dawn and your wounds shall heal quickly,"[66] the prophet reminds us.

(Programs and Plans Urgently Necessary)

114. What is lacking, however, is a clear government plan for the country's development. Under no circumstances can the government renounce its obligation to guide and stimulate that development, especially when it comes to the just distribution of the budget at the national level, with a preferential concern being shown for areas where poverty is critical. This requires a coherent plan which will take the various sectors of society into account and in which the central concern will be to obliterate the terrible poverty prevailing in so many homes.

(External Help and Internal Solutions)

115. To generate full employment, foreign help and investment will be necessary. But we cannot wait for others to do things or provide solutions. We ourselves must take the appropriate steps. We can generate many jobs by trusting in our own ability, creativity, and resources. Those who have money must invest in Panama. Capital must be attracted from abroad and put to work in Panama. Along the same lines, we must make an effort to stop consuming imported luxury goods and to consume our own goods instead. The challenge, then, is not just to consume what we produce but also to produce what we consume.

(Social Mortgage on Private Property)

116. In this connection, Pope John Paul II says: "It is necessary to recall once again that special principle of Christian doctrine: the goods of this world are originally intended for everyone. The right to private property is valid and necessary, but it does not invalidate the principle in question. It is encumbered with a 'social mortgage'—that is, one of its intrinsic qualities is a social function based on and justified by precisely that principle that goods are for everyone."[67] During his recent apostolic visit to Mexico, he was even more incisive and clear when he told Mexican businessmen: "On the other hand, do not forget that the only legitimate title to ownership of the means of production is that they serve labor. Because of that, one of your greatest responsibilities must be the creation of jobs."[68]

(Economic Model and Human Dignity and Rights)

117. We are currently witnessing an increase in neoliberalism around the world. That view regards the efficiency and profits of private enterprise as being the motors of progress, but it frequently says nothing at all about the redistribution of income, the rights of workers, or protection of the environment. As a church, we do not propose models, but we judge and evaluate economic systems and models from the standpoint of the human person's dignity and his individual, family, and social rights. The fate of the poorest segments of society judges us all. On the day of the final judgment, the Lord will say to us: "Truly I say to you, as you have done onto others you have done unto me."[69]

(Labor Laws and Right to Work)

118. For that very reason, we view with concern the tendency to leave the basic rights of working men to the free play of the market. All work is done by a human being whose basic rights are inviolable. In our Panama, the Labor Code, with its faults and defects, is intended to set forth and promote those rights. Any modification of that code must take into account the rights not only of those currently participating in the processes and benefits of production but also of those excluded from that participation, namely, those currently unemployed, the 30,000 young people who join the work force every year, and the new businessmen and investors who may appear.

(Privatization)

119. The subject of the privatization of state enterprises must also be analyzed with extreme care. It is obvious that the state is not the best choice when it comes to running a business and that as long as the common good does not require anything different, it should stick to work of a subsidiary nature and not enter spheres of activity belonging to other social bodies. Nevertheless, when any decision is being reached, the rights of the workers, national interests, and guarantees that services to the community will be efficiently provided must be taken into account from the beginning, with monopolies harmful to the national economy and the common good being avoided.

(Housing Construction)

120. We could promote the massive construction of low-cost housing by establishing a savings and credit plan in the local banks, using domestic materials, making cheap building sites available, and using manpower from the population being benefited wherever possible. If we did that, we would be generating new sources of work while also improving the people's quality of life.

(Helping Farmers)

121. It is urgently necessary to improve the living conditions of small farmers by providing soft loans, technical assistance, and access to markets. By supporting the peasant, we will be producing basic foodstuffs for the majority of the population and, at the same time, preventing massive migrations to the "poverty belts" in the urban areas.

(Conservation of Natural Resources)

122. One of the major challenges facing us is the conservation of our natural resources. In the past, trees have

been felled indiscriminately for the lumber industry and also for the purposes of agriculture and stockraising. In most cases, this has been done without considering the ecological damage being done and caused. Our resources are not inexhaustible, and we must use them with a concern for the future generations that will inhabit our land. Projects cannot be carried out at the cost of irreversible damage to our environment. In dealing with nature, we cannot accept an attitude and a behavior concerned only with immediate "use" and "consumption." The Creator's will is "that man should communicate with nature as an intelligent and noble 'lord' and 'custodian,' not as a 'user' and 'destroyer' without any respect."[70] All of us, therefore, must learn to care for and respect our natural resources as the heritage which God has given us to care for and use responsibly and with solidarity. For that reason, it is necessary to establish guidelines and develop methods for the safe disposal and recycling of the waste products of modern life so as to limit the contamination of soil and water and, at the same time, prevent the depletion of natural resources.

(Responsible Management of Natural Resources)

123. But at the same time, those resources must not be protected at the expense of man and, very especially, the small peasant who is struggling to survive. The preservation of our natural resources requires that people be taught to manage them responsibly. To that end, it is necessary to introduce new working methods, have access to the appropriate tools and equipment, and make the appropriate inputs available at reasonable cost.

(Foreign Debt and Development)

124. One of the worst burdens weighing on the country's economic development is the unbearable foreign debt. A large portion of the government's revenues must be used to service the debt. It is unlikely that we will achieve genuine sustained development under that burden, which will trip up our best efforts. The economically strong countries and the banks must understand that in the long run, that debt is going to be prejudicial to everyone's development and, therefore, to international peace.

(Criterion for Solution to Foreign Debt Problem)

125. Concerning the foreign debt, the Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace tells us: "An examination of the reasons—both external and internal—for the debt, its increasing amount, and the amounts repayable every year will make it possible, through dialogue, to clarify the responsibilities of the debtor and of his various creditors (states and commercial banks) with a view to finding fair solutions... But the creditors cannot demand compliance at all costs, especially if the debtor is in a situation of extreme need."[71]

(Health and Social Security System: Restored Areas)

126. There are other problems of a socioeconomic nature which are of great importance to the future coexistence of all Panamanians. One, for example, is the current confrontation between the integrated health system and the social security system; with arguments and urgent needs on both sides, a well-thought-out and coordinated attitude and solution on the part of the government is needed. Another example is the greater use of all the Canal Zone areas restored to Panama and everything having to do with intelligent and timely preparation and training for Panamanian operation of the canal after the year 2000. There should be insistence, beginning now, on the full exercise of the Panamanian rights stipulated in the Canal treaties.

C.1. Administration of Justice

(Situation With the Administration of Justice)

127. A touchy subject in the country's reconstruction is the administration of justice. It has collapsed completely in recent years. Continuous interference by the Defense Forces in all aspects of the judicial system from the courts to the prisons has thoroughly perverted that system. The yearning for justice has been one of the people's great aspirations during the struggle for democracy. For that reason, we understand the widespread acute concern for the proper administration of justice.

(Justice Without Exemptions or Privileges)

128. What we expect from the courts is the rule of law in this country, the recognition of every person's due, the equality of all before the law, and the absence of any exemptions or privileges. The administration of justice must protect society from the abuse of the weak by the powerful. As regards equality before the law, we must lift our voice to point out that in our jails, there are many poor people existing in subhuman conditions while waiting for the courts to hear their case. We appeal to the lawyers' associations to find a way to provide their professional and social services to these our brothers.

(Avalanche of Accusations, Resentment, and Revenge)

129. We are currently witnessing an avalanche of accusations and denunciations leveled at officials of the previous government. Many of those denunciations conceal a thirst for revenge that contradicts the very meaning of justice. Resentment and revenge are poor counselors in the search for justice. Moreover, while it was and is necessary to follow up on those denunciations, the avalanche in question has exceeded the capacity of the court system.

(Slowness of Justice)

130. There can be no doubt that the sluggish administration of justice—due in most cases to our legal system and caused, in other cases, by political interference—creates a climate of exasperation and discouragement. We know that all the cases cannot be resolved in one day. But we also know that some cases are settled at certain levels with no sentence being pronounced. Slow justice is also a form of injustice.

(Reconciliation and Justice)

131. Reconciliation and justice are inseparable. Neither forgiveness nor reconciliation is a possibility without justice. But we must not reduce the fact of reconciliation itself to merely legal terms. Justice, which precedes reconciliation, involves respect for the human person, a concern for the common good, and zealous promotion of the integrity of each citizen's life. It would be practically impossible to achieve national reconciliation without fulfilling the demands of justice.

(Prison System)

132. The capacity of the courts and the precarious condition of the prison system make the picture even gloomier. Our jails do not meet the minimum physical conditions for guaranteeing the basic rights of prisoners, although we must admit that when it comes to the humane treatment of prisoners, significant improvement has occurred. The accumulation of pending cases further prolongs the period that defendants are held in custody on remand, a period of incarceration which, even when required by the seriousness of the crime, should never last longer than the time it takes to draw up the papers in the case and prepare the legitimate defense to which the accused is entitled.

(Release on Bail and Presumption of Innocence)

133. On the other hand, release on bail, to which the accused may be entitled in most cases, does not mean that the person is innocent. The charges are being drawn up, and the trial is pending. It must be clearly realized, therefore, that release on bail does not mean acquittal. We must also learn that it is a basic right of every accused person to be presumed innocent until proven guilty.

C.2. Role of the Media

(Appeal to the Media)

134. During the difficult period our country is experiencing and with a democracy that must be strengthened ahead of us, the role of the media is of prime importance in educating the citizens to live in a democracy, encouraging everyone to be responsible for the country's reconstruction, and achieving the reconciliation of the Panamanians. That is why we appeal to the owners of the media and the professionals active in that field of human endeavor to speak at all times on behalf of man and his legitimate demands and dignity and to act as instruments of justice, truth, and love, remembering that "defending what is human means granting man access to the full truth."[72]

(Commitment to Truth and Justice)

135. Men and women working in the media must be committed to truth and justice. This means that in their task of providing information, they must do so properly: they must communicate the news, not fabricate it, and much less manipulate it. Speaking in public is a serious responsibility. Before publishing a news item, those responsible for doing so must verify the reliability of their source. In many cases, the harm inflicted by a slanderous or false news item is irreversible. Moreover, a half-truth is the same as a falsehood.

(Prejudicing Public Opinion)

136. Considering that the public is unfamiliar with the technical terminology used by the courts, we note with sadness that instead of explaining the terms used, certain media create more confusion in an atmosphere of sensationalism, thus prejudicing public opinion concerning the guilt of the accused and giving the impression that they are setting themselves up as courts convicting and passing sentence on the accused. Such attitudes contribute nothing to the administration of justice in Panama, but they do make it more difficult to achieve the reconciliation which the country needs. Nor is it fair to direct people's entire resentment against a few individuals when all of us share the blame for the misfortune which our people have suffered, as we pointed out in Part Two of this pastoral letter.

(Media's Humanist Task)

137. Living up to the mission that is theirs, the media must inform and guide people positively by encouraging the more humane sentiments in their readers and listeners. This requires that they overcome the mentality which regards the media as profit-making businesses. That concept runs counter to all ethics, it is immoral, and it ends up violating every person's right to receive the truth and be informed in a serious and objective manner.

(Advertising and Poverty)

138. We are concerned about the way in which the media promote the society of abundance exclusively. Because of that, we must also question the way in which advertising is conducted. Many advertisements are openly offensive to poor people, who are struggling in poverty to survive. While the majority of the population has only what is necessary for its subsistence, advertisements display an extravagant luxury that is superfluous. All of that increases the people's frustration and demonstrates a clear lack of human solidarity.

(Sound Entertainment, Training, and Education)

139. Sound entertainment produces a sound environment. But many entertainment programs reflect the opposite values. We would like to encourage the media to increase their educational programming. If only we could have more programs training and educating people in the direction of greater knowledge concerning human and social reality so as to find solutions to the problems afflicting us.

(Every Occupation Has an Ethical Dimension)

140. What we have said here about the media could also have been said about any other profession or occupation. The media are currently in the limelight because they are enjoying a freedom that was long denied them. But every profession or occupation has an ethical dimension: the work done in that particular field contributes to the humanization of society. The engineer, builder, police officer, nurse, and teacher—all of us, men and women, have a contribution to make to the material and spiritual growth of our people.

D. For a New and More Humane Culture

(What Is Culture)

141. Politics and economics are only a part of our culture. Through their structures, they express our values and our way of relating to each other as individuals and as a people. But culture comprises much more than just its political and economic components. Religion, language, education, art, family, and ethics make up the deepest part of our being as a people and as individuals. Culture is therefore the particular way in which each people expresses its identity and relates to itself, to God, to others, and to nature.

(Recovering Our Identity)

142. It is urgently necessary to recover our identity as a people. History has often made us depend on the decisions that others have made for us. It is necessary to begin taking responsibility for history into our own hands. We cannot keep on depending on the decisions made by others.

(Multiracial and Multicultural Reality)

143. At the same time, it is necessary to acknowledge the diversity of cultures existing among us. As the Panamanian nation, we are not and cannot claim to be uniform. We have a great cultural diversity which is also our asset; they are: the Indian, Afro-American, West Indian, North American, European, and Asian cultures as well as the culture of the interior. To build a new Panama is only possible if we respect and value our own multicultural and multiracial diversity. We must reclaim our roots, recover our traditional values, and give life to our own identity so that we can advance to meet the new challenges of present-day history.

(Historical Rights and Just Demands of Indians)

144. Many cultural groups among us have been scorned and neglected until now, examples being the Indians and Afro-Americans. Here we want to mention our Indian brothers in particular. We cannot ignore their situation of isolation and poverty. We need a Panama capable of taking up the cause of those peoples by recognizing their historical rights and their just demands: sufficient territory to ensure their survival as peoples, protection for their cultures, and complete assistance in the fields of health, education, and development. In short, respect for the fact that they are Indians in a united and prosperous Panama. And especially now when, together with other nations in America and Europe, we are preparing to commemorate the fifth centennial of the "Meeting of Two Worlds," with its consequences of death and resurrection.[73]

(Threats: Consumerism and Individualism)

145. The greatest threats to our cultural values are consumerism and individualism, which are spreading like a new universal culture, particularly through the media. We cannot afford to lose our authentic values by letting ourselves be seduced by superficiality and appearances, which destroy solidarity and our own identity. As pastors, we make a commitment to the nation to rescue our best cultural values so as to permit them to become impregnated by the Gospel. Evangelization does not take away our culture but leads it to its most perfect form.

(Values and Family)

146. In Part One of this pastoral letter, we drew attention to the serious challenge facing us as a result of the profound crisis in moral and social values. The task belongs to everyone: the home, the school, society, the media, and the various organizations in which our people's daily life is carried on. In this connection, we draw attention to Panama's urgent need for families capable of forming new men. The family is the basic cell of society: the cradle of life and love in which man learns the basic values that will mark his existence and his struggles. Without stable families in which the values of human solidarity and an upright life are experienced, it will be hard for us to work for a better Panama. "As experience demonstrates, civilization and the cohesion of nations depends primarily on the human quality of its families."[74] To sum up, what is needed is a reform in judgment, conscience, and character along with a purification of the environment in which we live that will make possible the moral reconstruction of the Panamanian people. In that connection, all Panama is awaiting the presentation of the Draft Family Code to the Legislative Assembly.

(Crisis in Education)

147. For almost two decades, we have endured a continuing crisis in education. Despite the manifest will of the Panamanian people as expressed in the actions through which the educational reforms of 1979 were rejected, political imperatives have prevented the carrying out of a reform of the system and of the education law to reflect current requirements and needs. The result has been a lowering of the quality and quantity of education, the crumbling of religious, civic, ethical, and political values, and the corruption of the educator's ideal and his calling—in short, the manipulation of the educational institutions and organizations.

(Rescuing Education)

148. It is necessary, therefore, to rescue education as a service to man and society, as the bearer of values and generator of attitudes, as a primary right of the head of the household which can never be given up, as the right of every Panamanian and the subsidiary duty of the government, and as the technical and ethical enabler and bulwark of national development. The reinstallation of the Coordinating Committee on National Education opens up the prospect that that reform will be carried out, hopefully!!!, without complexes or ties to the past and with no monopolies or exclusive rights for groups, unions, or sectors.

(No to Divorce Between Faith and Life)

149. In working for a more authentic Panama, we will be doing no more than announcing the Gospel through our everyday life. All too often, we have separated the Gospel from daily life, reserving it for Sundays, important family or social events, and private life. We have a need—an urgent need!!!—for men and women who are willing to live the Gospel in their everyday lives and daring enough to permeate the structures of society with the values of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because "a faith that does not become a way of life is a faith that has not been fully received, thoroughly thought out, or faithfully received."[75]

(Love for the Poor and the Gospel)

150. Preferential love for the poor is the unmistakable sign of a life lived according to the Gospel. Love for the poor person is the privileged place for gaining Christian knowledge through experience. We reiterate at this time that that love, reflected in prompt and effective actions, should be manifested particularly toward the victims in El Chorrillo and Colon and toward the other underprivileged areas on the outskirts of the capital city.

Conclusion: Let Us Build Our Future Together

(Building the Future Now)

151. "Be prepared to give an account of your hope to those who ask." [76] That is what we want to do, and with the urgency instilled in us by the love of Christ, we urge everyone to begin building that future now, because there are thousands of our brothers who cannot wait for a possible tomorrow to begin living as befits their human dignity and their calling as children of God.

(Love of Fatherland)

152. In this adventure of making history and building something new, we must feel our solidarity. We are told by Pope John Paul II: "This effort must be accompanied by love of that fatherland, love of its culture and history, and love of those specific values which determine its position in the great family of nations: in short, by love of one's fellow citizens—men who speak the same language and have responsibilities in that common cause known as the fatherland."

May Our Lady Saint Mary of La Antigua, mother of hope and star of our evangelization, accompany us on this path and grant us through her Divine Son the grace to be, day by day, a people and a nation of brothers.

Panama City, 25 July 1990, Feast of St. James the Apostle.

[signed] Jose Dimas Cedeno D., Bishop of Santiago, Chairman of the CEP

[signed] Marcos G. McGrath, C.B.C., Metropolitan Archbishop of Panama

[signed] Daniel E. Nunez, Bishop of David, Deputy chairman of the CEP

[signed] Jose Luis Lacunza, O.A.R., Auxiliary Bishop of Panama, Secretary of the CEP

[signed] Jose Maria Carrizo V., Bishop of Chitre

[signed] Carlos Maria Ariz, C.M.F., Bishop of Colon

[signed] Jose Augustin Ganuza, O.A.R., Bishop Prelate of Bocas

[signed] Romulo Emiliani, C.M.F., Bishop, Vicar Apostolic of Darien

[signed] Carlos A. Lewis, S.V.D., Coadjutor Bishop of David

[signed] Oscar Mario Brown O., Auxiliary Bishop of Panama

[signed] Marcos Zuluaga, O.H.P., Bishop Emeritus of Darien

Footnotes

1. John Paul II, Encyclical **The Redeemer of Man** (RH), No 13, 4 March 1979.

2. Cf. RHA No 14-15.

3. Cf. CEP Pastoral Letter **The Situation in the Country**, 29 June 1978, where the problems are set forth.

4. Cf. Pastoral Constitution **The Church in Today's World** (GS), 1.

5. Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace, **The Person, the Nation, and the State.** Social Teaching of John Paul II, pamphlet No 6, 1980.

6. Puebla Document (DP) No 274.

7. See section B of this pastoral letter which contains the study carried out by the Catholic Church, Archdiocese of Panama (1 May 1985), with the participation of a multidisciplinary team, **Toward a More Human**

Economy. Christian Reflections for the Development of Panama With Priority on the Poor, pages 81-85, 117, and 120.

8. CEP Pastoral Letter **The Situation in the Country**, 29 June 1978, paragraphs 3, 5, 13, and 16.

9. Cf. CEP Pastoral Letter 1, **The Cerro Colorado Project**, "The Bishops Speak" series, 11 May 1979. Cf. **The Guaymi Indian and Cerro Colorado**, by the bishop and priest of David, dated 19 April 1979.

10. CEP statement, 21 September 1979. Cf. No 2, **The Bishops and the Educational Reform.**

11. "Toward a More Human Economy," page 117; see chapter two on the classification of poverty in Panama, pages 23-31.

12. Ibid., pages 119-120

13. Cf. Pastoral Letter No 7, "The Bishops Speak" series, **On the Present Political Situation** 5 February 1984.

14. Declaration by the CEP, **On the Electoral Process** 25 May 1984.

15. CEP, On the Present Political Situation, No 11.

16. Communique from the CEP Permanent Committee, 19 September 1985.

17. Ibid.

18. CEP communique, "Bishops Conference" series, No 7, 8 July 1987.

19. CEP message, "Bishops Conference" series, No 8, 20 April 1988.

20. Cf. CEP communique dated 11 May 1989. See also the communiques from the Diocese of David and the Congregation of the Mission dated 8 and 9 May 1989, respectively.

21. Ibid., No 3.

22. John Paul II, **Address to Diplomats During His Apostolic Visit to Brazil**, 1980.

23. CEP communique dated 22 December 1989.

24. Communique from the Christian Ecumenical Committee of Panama, 3 January 1990.

25. Message from the Archbishop and Priests Council of the Archdiocese of Panama, **To God's People Who Travel in Hope**, 10 May 1990.

26. Dr. Diego Dominguez Caballero, "Invasion, Liberation, and National Identity," PANORAMICO CATOLICO, 24 June 1990.

27. Homily by the archbishop of Panama, 9 January 1990.

28. Message from the Catholic Church in Colon and Kuna Yala and Darien, 25 January 1990.

29. Speech by the archbishop of Panama at the Fourth Pastoral Assembly, 16 February 1990.

30. Ministry of Housing, **Report on the Demand for Housing**, Panama, June 1990.

31. Cf. homily by the archbishop of Panama at the 20th Eucharistic Meeting, 17 June 1990.

32. Cf. John Paul II, message for World Peace Day, 1990, **Peace With God the Creator, Peace with Creation.**

33. C.E.P Pastoral Letter No 7, **On the Present Political Situation**, (1984), 12, p 10.

34. Cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church **Lumen Gentium (LG)**, Vatican II, 8d-9.

35. Cf. John 4:7.

36. General Conference in Puebla, **Message to the Peoples of Latin America**, 8.

37. Episcopal Secretariat of Central America and Panama (SEDAC), **Let Us Build Peace in Christ**, chapters one and two.

38. Cf. Deuteronomy 4:7.

39. Cf. Romans 8:18-22.

40. Psalm 23.

41. Cf. Hebrews 4:16.

42. Hebrews 5-6.

43. Cf. Psalms 72:4, 12, 13; 35:10.

44. DP 592.

45. DP 196.

46. Cf. Luke 12.

47. Cf. the various messages from Pope Paul VI on this subject; DP 1188; **Message to the Peoples of Latin America**, 8.

48. See DP, especially Nos 211-218 and Part Three.

49. Cf. CEP, **The New Evangelization** (110), 5 June 1988.

50. John 8:7.

51. DP 438.

52. St. Irenaeus, "Treatise Against Heresies," books 4, 20.

53. SEDAC, **Let Us Build Peace in Christ**, Nos 4-13.

54. Paul VI, apostolic exhortation **Evangelii Nuntiandi**, Nos 10-20.

55. CEP Message, **The New Evangelization in Panama**, No 13 seq.

56. Cf. DP 395; "The New Evangelization in Panama."

57. Isaiah 11:1-4.

58. St. Augustine, **Epistle**, 133, 2.

59. Communique from the Pauline Fathers (Panama) on the first anniversary of the death of Father Nicolas Van Kleef, 7 May 1990.

60. Matthew 7:21.

61. John Paul II, apostolic visit to Brazil, **Speech to the Authorities of the Republic**, 30 May 1980.

62. John Paul II, ibid.

63. Luke 22:25-26.

64. John Paul II, apostolic exhortation **Christifideles Laici**, No 42.

65. While this pastoral letter was at the printers, a document drafted by the Ministry of Planning and Economic Policy and entitled "National Strategy for Development and Economic Modernization" was made public. We hope that the guidelines we have set forth in this section and in other parts of this letter will serve as the basis for public debate concerning that document.

66. Isaiah 58:7-8.

67. John Paul II, encyclical "The Social Concern of the Church," No 42.

68. John Paul II, second pastoral visit to Mexico, speech to businessmen, Durango, May 1990.

69. Matthew 25:45.

70. John Paul II, encyclical **The Redeemer of Man**, 315.

71. Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace, **In the Service of the Human Community; an Ethical Consideration of the Foreign Debt**, 27 December 1986, III, 3.

72. Cf. address by His Holiness John Paul II to the bishops of Panama in his "Visita ad Limina Apostolorum," No 8, dated 30 January 1989.

73. John Paul II, apostolic exhortation **Christifideles Laici**, No 40.

74. John Paul II, **Charter Establishing the Pontifical Commission for Culture**, 20 May 1982.

75. 1 Peter 3:16.

76. John Paul II, **To the Pilgrims of Lower Silesia**, 5 June 1979.